

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1           1.     A pressure plate assembly for a friction clutch, comprising:  
2                 a housing connectable with an abutment arrangement for rotation  
3     therewith about an axis of rotation, the housing having an outer axial side and an inner  
4     axial side;  
5                 a pressure plate mounted in said housing facing said inner axial side such  
6     that said pressure plate is rotatable with said housing, said pressure plate having  
7     actuating sections extending past a radially outer edge of said housing;  
8                 an energy storage element mounted on said outer side of said housing  
9     such that said energy storage device exerts an engaging force onto said actuating  
10    sections for urging said pressure plate away from said inner axial side; and  
11                an assembly pretensioning arrangement for holding said energy storage  
12    element in a pretensioned assembly position in which the engaging force is prevented  
13    from acting on said housing.
- 1           2.     The pressure plate assembly of claim 1, further comprising a plurality  
2     of carrier elements arranged on said housing for supporting said energy storage  
3     element, said assembly pretensioning arrangement comprising at least one assembly  
4     pretensioning element for supporting said energy storage element in the pretensioned  
5     assembly position relative to said at least one carrier element.

1           3. The pressure plate assembly of claim 2, wherein said at least one  
2 carrier element includes a supporting area at an end of said at least one carrier element  
3 facing away from said housing, and wherein said at least one assembly pretensioning  
4 element is positioned between said energy storage element and said supporting area  
5 when said energy storage element is in the pretensioned assembly position.

1           4. The pressure plate assembly of claim 3, wherein said at least one  
2 assembly pretensioning element is ring-shaped and interacts with at least two of said  
3 plural carrier elements to hold said energy storage element in the pretensioned  
4 assembly position.

1           5. The pressure plate assembly of claim 2, wherein said at least one  
2 assembly pretensioning element is ring-shaped and interacts with at least two of said  
3 plural carrier elements to hold said energy storage element in the pretensioned  
4 assembly position.

1           6. The pressure plate assembly of claim 5, wherein said at least one  
2 assembly pretensioning element interacts with each of said plural carrier elements.

1           7. The pressure plate assembly of claim 5, wherein said at least one  
2 assembly pretensioning element is an open ring-shaped element and is radially  
3 deformable for producing and releasing the pretensioned assembly position.

1           8. The pressure plate assembly of claim 1, wherein said pressure plate  
2 assembly is a multi-disk pressure plate assembly further comprising an intermediate

3 plate connected to said housing for rotation with said housing and said pressure plate  
4 about said axis of rotation.

1 9. A process for bringing an energy storage element of a pressure plate  
2 assembly of a friction clutch into a pretensioned assembly position and holding the  
3 energy storage element in the pretensioned assembly position, the energy storage  
4 element being connected on an outer axial side of the housing of the pressure plate  
5 assembly, the method including the steps of

6 exerting a force on the energy storage element to bring the energy storage  
7 element to a state of deformation which produces an intermediate space between the  
8 energy storage element and a support area of a carrier element which supports the  
9 energy storage element on the housing;

10 inserting at least one assembly pretensioning element into the  
11 intermediate space; and

12 releasing the energy storage element so that it arrives in the pretensioned  
13 assembly position against the at least one assembly pretensioning element.

1 10. In a pressure plate assembly having a housing connectable with an  
2 abutment arrangement for rotation therewith about an axis of rotation, the housing  
3 having an outer axial side and an inner axial side, a pressure plate mounted in said  
4 housing facing said inner axial side such that said pressure plate is rotatable with said  
5 housing, said pressure plate having actuating sections extending past a radially outer  
6 edge of said housing, and an energy storage element mounted on said outer side of

7 said housing such that said energy storage device exerts a force on said actuating  
8 sections for urging said pressure plate away from said inner axial side, an assembly  
9 pretensioning element comprising a ring-shaped pretensioning body with a break in its  
10 circumference, the break allowing the assembly pretensioning element to be radially  
11 deformed to produce and to release the pretensioned assembly state.

1 11. The assembly pretensioning element of claim 10, further  
2 comprising handle formations at ends next to the break in the circumference to facilitate  
3 the radial deformation.

1 12. The assembly pretensioning element of claim 10, wherein said  
2 assembly pretensioning element is made of wire.